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**Exploring equality, justice and identity amongst host nationals and expatriates:
Which human factors enable empowerment of Filipino aid workers?**

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Abstract

Providing decent work has been emphasised by the United Nations as a key objective in its Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction (United Nations, 2000). Decent work includes capacity building between expatriate and their host national aid workers. Optimizing empowerment to enable decent work amongst local aid workers may depend on human factors, alongside wider poverty reduction efforts, such as economic and political reform. This study sought to explore which of local:expatriate numerical ratio, expatriate social dominance, strength of Filipino identity and perceptions of workplace justice were predictive of different levels of subjective empowerment amongst aid workers in one particular lower-income, high-poverty country, the Philippines.

Responses to an online survey available in both English and Tagalog were obtained from $N = 98$ employees of diverse locally operating aid organisations in the Philippines during two months in early 2011 (29% male; 71% female; mean age = 35.5 years; all resident in the Philippines). The survey included measures of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), estimated local:expatriate numerical ratio, perceived social dominance (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), social identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999), justice (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993), social desirability (D. G. Fischer & Fick, 1993), estimated local:expatriate salary ratio and a number of demographic control measures (e.g., age, years of relevant work experience, level of education). Respondents chose to participate by clicking a link in an email sent by seven development sector practitioners who agreed to assist the researcher with distribution of invitations to their staff or contact lists. The link opened an online survey hosted by kwiksurveys.co.uk. Data was downloaded from the kwiksurveys.co.uk online database and analysed by the researcher using SPSS.

Controlling for age and other demographic variables, the best predictor of enabling empowerment was the fairness of personal interactions (interactional justice; $\beta = .331$). Interactional justice was also a significant predictor of the perceptions local employees had specifically about their impact in their workplace ($\beta = .295$), although this relationship was strongest when employees' sense of self respect was weaker, implying that a secure social identity may act as a buffer to consequences of injustice, all other things being equal (interaction effect $\beta = -.233$). Distributive justice predicted

each of four distinct facets of empowerment (competence; meaning; self-determination i.e., sense of control over one's work; and impact, i.e., sense of making a difference in one's work).

The overall pattern of results suggests that justice plays a more significant role than either dominance or identity in contributing to empowerment amongst Filipino aid employees. Strikingly, fair interpersonal treatment may matter more than distributive justice. Alongside the effects of justice, expatriate attitudes towards hierarchy and host nationals' sense of self respect are also significant factors, impacting empowerment in different ways. Given potential distortions arising from unknown response rate and a self-report methodology, further research, ideally with better control of sampling, is suggested. Possible avenues include exploring whether interpersonal treatment may matter more than distributive justice in collectivistic societies; whether self respect may act as a buffer against the effects of injustice; and how social dominance operates outside its traditional research contexts.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1 – These and Critical Literature Review	1
Local Employee Empowerment	3
Numerical Ratio.....	5
Perceived Social Dominance.....	6
Social Identity.....	8
Organisational Justice	8
Distributive Justice.....	8
Procedural Justice	9
Interactional Justice.....	10
How might Demographics affect Empowerment?	10
How might Numerical Ratio affect Empowerment?	11
How might Perceived Social Dominance affect Empowerment?	12
How might Social Identity affect Empowerment?	13
How might Justice affect Empowerment?	14
Possible Interaction Effects	15
Potential theoretical limitations in the present cultural context	16
Local Employee Empowerment.....	16
Perceived Social Dominance	18
Social Identity.....	20
Organisational Justice	21
Chapter 2 - Method.....	23
Participants	23
Measures.....	23
Local Employee Empowerment.....	23
Demographics.....	24
Numerical Ratio.....	24
Perceived Social Dominance	24
Social Identity.....	26
Organisational Justice	26
Social Desirability.....	27

Procedure	27
Chapter 3 - Results	31
Checking the properties of the measures.....	31
Numerical Ratio of Filipino:Expatriate workers.....	31
Salary Ratio between Filipino:Expatriate workers	31
Protocol for Factor Analyses	32
Empowerment	33
Perceived Social Dominance	34
Social Identity	36
Organisational Justice.....	37
Social Desirability.....	38
Descriptive statistics.....	39
Univariate correlations between the key constructs.....	40
Protocol for Regression Analyses	43
Issues with assumptions: Univariate normality and multicollinearity	44
What predicts employees' sense of Competence?	44
What predicts employees' sense of Self-Determination?.....	46
What predicts employees' sense of Meaning?.....	46
What predicts employees' sense of Impact?.....	47
What predicts Empowerment as a whole?.....	47
Post hoc analyses	49
Protocol for moderation exploration	49
Does Distributive Justice moderate the relationship between Interactional Justice and Empowerment?.....	50
Does Self Respect moderate the relationship between Interactional Justice and Empowerment?	50
Chapter 4 - Discussion	53
Graphic summary of key findings.....	53
Key findings.....	54
The pervasive impact of Justice on Empowerment.....	54
The significance of Age and Experience.....	54
How Expatriate Attitudes affect Local Employee Empowerment.....	55
How Social Identity contributes to Empowerment in the workplace	55
Is Employee Empowerment about Social Identity or Social Dominance?.....	56
How the Philippine context affected the constructs measured in this study	56
Theoretical implications	57
What contributes to Empowerment amongst local employees?	57
Does Dominance matter in the Philippine context?	59
The effects of the different types of Justice.....	60

Policy implications.....	61
Limitations and Improvements	62
Sampling.....	62
Design issues	62
Language issues	63
Analysis issues.....	64
Suggestions for further research	65
Conclusion.....	66
Appendices	69
Appendix A: Questionnaire (English).....	69
Appendix B: Questionnaire (Tagalog).....	74
Appendix C: Invitation to Participate (English)	83
Appendix D: Invitation to Participate (Tagalog).....	86
References	91

List of Tables

Table 1. Factor solution for Empowerment measure.....	33
Table 2. Factor Correlations for Empowerment measure	34
Table 3. Factor solution for Perceived Social Dominance measure.....	35
Table 4. Factor solution for Social Identity measure.....	36
Table 5. Factor solution for Organisational Justice measure	37
Table 6. Factor correlations for Organisational Justice measure	38
Table 7. Communalities for Social Desirability measure	38
Table 8: Descriptives of all variables	39
Table 9: Correlation matrix	42
Table 10. Significant predictors of facets of Empowerment (Competence, Meaning, Self-Determination & Impact) as well as EMPOWERMENT as a whole.	45

List of Figures

Figure 1. Possible antecedents of Local Employee Empowerment.....	2
Figure 2. Potential relationships between (components of) Justice and Empowerment ..	9
Figure 3. Moderation of the relationship between Interactional Justice and Empowerment by Self Respect	51
Figure 4: Observed predictors of Empowerment and its components.....	53